

Boosting My Child's Self Esteem

Establishing a loving relationship from the start can help you and your child through the bumpy teenage years.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) suggests the following ways for parents to prepare for their child's teenage years:

Provide a safe and loving home environment.

Create an atmosphere of honesty, trust and respect.

Allow age-appropriate independence and assertiveness.

Develop a relationship that encourages your teen to talk to you when he or she is upset.

Teach responsibility for your teen's belongings and yours.

Teach basic responsibility for household chores.

Teach the importance of accepting limits.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Remember that your teen may experiment when trying to define himself or herself. They may change their values, ideas, hairstyles, or clothing. This is typically normal behavior. However, inappropriate or destructive behavior can be a sign of a problem. Some teens are at risk for a number of self-destructive behaviors. These teens often have low self-esteem or family problems. They may experiment with using drugs or alcohol or having unprotected sex. Depression and eating disorders are other common health issues that teens face.

THE FOLLOWING MAY BE WARNING SIGNS THAT YOUR CHILD IS HAVING A PROBLEM:

- Agitated or restless behavior.
- Weight loss or gain.
- A drop in grades.
- Trouble concentrating.
- Ongoing feelings of sadness.
- Not caring about people and things.
- Lack of motivation.
- Fatigue, loss of energy, and lack of interest in activities.
- Low self-esteem.
- Trouble falling asleep.
- Run-ins with the law.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF THERE IS A PROBLEM?

Work together to maintain open communication. If you suspect there is a problem, ask your teen about what is bothering him or her. Don't ignore a problem in the hopes that it will go away. Resources are available, starting with your child's doctor.

